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# Teaching Pronunciation in an Undefined Curriculum

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# TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN AN UNDEFINED CIRRICULUM

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THIS PROJECT BY JOAN BRANSON  
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## A. INTRODUCTION

Language, as a process of communication, consists of many components. In order to speak a language well enough to communicate with and understand native speakers of that language, a student studies grammar structures and vocabulary. This is often accomplished within an environment where problems are dealt within a structured framework. Students who succeed are usually able to operate within the society in a reasonable manner.

However, many people still do not feel comfortable dealing with their environment for a variety of reasons - mainly language skills and cultural factors. Many more have learned the language on a more haphazard basis and feel the effects even more strongly.

This is especially true when new immigrants are not offered language programs designed for their special needs. Accessibility and cost are major factors. Many are missed, - especially housewives and laborers. Depending on their socio-economic status and their social environment, the need for study may not arise for some years.

At this point, the individual's comprehension of the language may be quite good. The deciding factor for many students is that they are often misunderstood by native speakers and are unable to function as effectively as they wish.

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One example of this is a student who graduated from a local university and is now in the work force. He was able to comprehend lectures and write exams well enough to earn an engineering degree. His spoken deficiencies have only recently begun to trouble him in his new job. The major complaint is that no one understands his speech. He blames this on his pronunciation.

Typically, people in this dilemma will seek to rectify the problem by enrolling in a course which will improve intelligibility. Their own analysis of language deficits - grammar, writing or pronunciation - is reflected in the type of course they choose. When given options, an adult student will enroll in a course which promises to remedy the perceived deficit.

The option I am most involved with at present is pronunciation. This choice is generally made by the student and may or may not be a correct analysis. Nevertheless, the student is there on the assumption that thirty hours of pronunciation will resolve the problem.

It is my opinion that teaching pronunciation is usually most effectively accomplished along with the teaching of the language as a whole. If given some emphasis with beginning students, the habits are strengthened by practice while learning other components of the language.

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Beginning students are often the most amenable to this aspect of the language. Initial enthusiasm also provides additional motivation. They

also have the added advantage of "starting fresh". A student who has transferred sounds and intonation patterns from another language and who has been practicing these habits for several years is less likely to transfer new knowledge into general conversation.

As an example, a student from a previous class was having considerable trouble with initial (h) due to her French Canadian background. She had been speaking English for about five years and was determined to "lose" as much as possible of her rather strong accent.

In class, she was able to hear and reproduce the sound correctly with little difficulty. Even before the class she was aware of the distinction but felt that taking the class would solve this and similar problems. No matter how well she performed in class, she immediately reverted to her usual speech patterns outside of class.

After this discrepancy was pointed out to her, she made considerable effort in conversations with me to speak more correctly. However, with other students, she reverted again to her usual speech habits. Generalizing what she knew and could reproduce gradually extended to the entire class and hopefully outside of the classroom. It was necessary to involve the class in each others' problems in order to have much effect on pronunciation.

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Another problem confronting students - and a danger for the teacher - is what I call "English teacher syndrome." I have come to realize that ESL teachers are a breed apart from the usual run-of-the-mill native

speaker. We are different because of our increased awareness of the problems students have.

One of my students and I were having a conversation with another native speaker of English. After the student had left, my friend remarked that this fellow was very hard to understand because of his accent. I had been able to understand him quite well.

This situation is probably altogether too familiar to a language learner. After studying carefully, you feel you are doing quite well. Suddenly, these people don't understand their own language!

As a teacher of language, the problem is readily apparent. You've done something unspeakable to a sound or stress and can make other attempts at communicating - providing the other person has the patience to put up with it.

As a teacher, listening to the same thing, interpretation at an unconscious (or conscious) level takes place. If I know that student X is of a particular language background, a certain error will occur on a predictable basis. I recognize the carry-over and can re-arrange these in my mind quite quickly in order to "understand" the statement. Thus, the communicative process is facilitated via the special understanding between teacher and student.

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The student is not likely to find this in situations outside the classroom. Statements from the students in my classes lead me to understand that

although they communicate very well with teachers, they experience great difficulty in dealing with the public at large.

I find this makes students apprehensive about their ability to deal with certain aspects of their life in general. They may be reluctant to use the telephone, take jobs or request goods and services in stores. They feel strongly that their English is severely deficient. Although they can understand the world around them, they hesitate to interact directly with that world. As a result, adjustment within a new culture becomes even more difficult due to this apprehension.

Finding out just what the difficulties are and what each individual student wants from a course requires considerable time and effort on the part of the teacher. Supporting counselling to increase confidence has been, at least in my classes, as important as pronunciation.

During the first class, my involvement with the students led me to realize why they are taking the class. I feel strongly that social interaction, acceptance and a personal interest in the students have a direct bearing on the objectives of the class.

Planning objectives, materials and methodology should relate to these needs as well as specifics within the area of pronunciation. Clearly, the perceived needs of the students should be elicited and acted upon.

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Teacher observation also plays an important role in defining what is necessary and to what level or intensity the material will be taught.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

These are derived from a combination of student requests and my own opinions about necessary material. The following ideas are intended to serve as a reference rather than a course outline. For this reason they are organized according to content.

These have all been used successfully in various classes according to student need and the class in particular.

### I. Planning Objectives

When stating objectives for a course of this nature, I find it useful to separate them into two categories - general and specific. Considering both the "why" and the "what" helps me to maintain a sense of direction and balance between the general purposes and specific details of a particular lesson.

General objectives refer to the larger purposes of the class. These will almost always be the same and indicate less observable aspects of lesson planning. They will consider student needs and priorities on an overall basis.

Specific objectives, on the other hand, may change depending on the particular class. They may relate to the class as a whole or to an individual student. They will also relate directly to the selection of particular material for a lesson.

While general objectives may be stated with some confidence and adhered to throughout the class, specific objectives are sometimes better planned after initial contact with the students. They may be visualized as a list which may be changed or added to at any time. Certain items considered essential and established through experience will form a central core. Others may be added, deleted or individualized in response to student performance or feedback.

1. General Objectives

- (a) Providing the opportunity for students to encounter and practice specific aspects of pronunciation, stress, and intonation within an encouraging atmosphere.
- (b) Providing an atmosphere which allows students to gain or re-gain confidence in their verbal performance.
- (c) Providing for transfer of skills acquired in class to general speech outside of class.
- (d) Providing for insight into the sound system and rhythm of the language so the student can analyze errors, experiment and continue to improve after the thirty class hours.

- (e) Providing for an understanding of native speaker speech for purposes of comprehension and possibly imitation as well as awareness of differences in individual speech.
- (f) Providing for reassurance that intelligible speech and an accent are not mutually exclusive. While perfection is not necessarily unattainable or undesirable, it need not be an inhibiting factor in communication.
- (g) Provide individual assistance on an organized basis. The rationale for this is that students must isolate and tackle specific problems with some measure of success. Resolving three of thirty problems is at least encouraging to the student and illustrates a method of approach towards solving others. Considering the duration of course (thirty hours) and the scope of the problems generally encountered, teaching the students how to approach and manage difficulties appears to be the more practical solution.

## 2. Specific Objectives

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### (a) Core Objectives

- (i) Finding out and establishing student priorities



- (ii) The sound system of English reduced to a finite number of components.
- (iii) What stress and intonation are and why they are important.
- (iv) Use of a dictionary based on knowledge of the sound system (i.e. phonetic transcript)

(b) Examination of native speaker speech - slurs, omissions, contractions etc. (These may be dialectical and may be chosen on this basis).

(c) Difficult sounds. The selection of sounds which cause most students of English difficulty depends on the ethnicity of the class. A list can be compiled of the likely problem areas and changed or added to as desired.

(d) The rhythm or music of the language - specific exercises in stress and timing as indicated by student speech.

(e) Additional objectives can be established on the basis of contact with the students. Lists for the class and/or individual students can be used to establish priorities in regards to class time. These may be derived from commonality of errors or specifically requested by the student (s). These references are

useful in providing individual assistance to the students.

## II Materials and Resources

### 1. The Language Lab

This is undoubtedly a major tool in the teaching of pronunciation. Any equipment which allows the student to hear errors and use imitation is essential.

Basically, the lab I am using is set up to record master tapes and to monitor students on an individual basis. Student booths are equipped with mirrors and operate on small cassettes. Student practice can be erased and re-done during lab time while the teacher can monitor or communicate with each student directly.

I have found using the lab allows me considerable freedom in individualizing material for a multicultural classroom. It does not disrupt the class and problems which may not pertain to others or even the lesson may be dealt with.

For example, a lesson designed for practicing a particular consonant sound may be taped beforehand or directly with the class. After some class rehearsal, the students review and practice the material. One or two students may be having trouble and can be assisted while the others work. Another

sound - perhaps from a previous lesson or particular to one student - may also be taught and practiced.

I have encouraged students to use the mirrors extensively and find they are valuable visual aids. If a lab does not have them, students can be supplied with or purchase their own small mirrors. They should also be encouraged to use mirrors for at-home practice.

As language labs are expensive and not always available, a small recorder could be substituted. Mine has both condenser and hand microphones. Although it is not as efficient, it can be used in a pinch. The sound reproduction is poorer and master tapes can't be made with it, but it can be battery operated!

In reality, there is no comparison between a well-equipped language lab and portable equipment. However, if a lab is not available, a small recorder is better than nothing. The opportunity for the students to hear themselves as they speak is the primary consideration.

A note of caution should be included here: no matter what our equipment consists of - be familiar with it! No two labs are alike and unless you are totally at ease with the marvels of technology, you could well be faced with a class prepared to work and a switch you can't find!

Keep in mind, too, that if others have access to the lab, it may be used for different purposes. I have found it to my advantage to spend some time before the class begins familiarizing myself with the equipment and also to check it before each class begins. That way, there is no interruption or waste of class-time.

Students who are unfamiliar with such equipment also need time to acquaint themselves with it. Generally, they feel rather strange seated in a booth with headphones and microphones. Women are usually more hesitant than men, but all students need time to feel comfortable.

Out of consideration for the student, some time should be allotted to instruction in the use of the lab. Instructions should be simple. A hand-out could be given to the students outlining the procedure step-by-step. After going over it in class, it becomes useful for future reference. For a beginning class, phrases such as "put-on", "check" and "plug-in" are also valuable.

I also make sure that I have cassettes on hand -- especially the first day. Students at this school are required to purchase their own. However, on the first day they won't have them.

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Occasionally, a student will forget to bring one and be unable to work.

Cassettes could be purchased and re-sold to the students if they are not available through the school. This would be a matter of individual preference and finances but it is efficient. I also make a habit of having one or two for loan throughout the course for emergency use. To me, this is more efficient for both myself and the student in terms of class-time.

Although the lab is an important part of a pronunciation class, it must be used wisely. I find that the student - teacher relationship is altered considerably by the physical constraint of the lab. Unless the class format is broken regularly by other instructional methods, students are prone to feel mechanized, isolated and bored with the routine. I make a point of going directly to the student terminals on occasion rather than confining my communication to the headsets. I find this mobility partially offsets the effects of the isolated booths.

Generally, I use the lab for only part of the hour and a half or alternate classes between the lab and the classroom. I feel that about one-half to three-quarters of the total course time should be spent in the lab to allow for adequate practice time. Using the lab more extensively at the beginning of the course takes advantage of initial enthusiasm and increases student competence for classroom lessons later on.

In summary, this is a basic checklist I keep in regards to the use of the language lab:

- (1) Know your equipment
- (2) Prepare hand-outs
- (3) Arrange for cassettes and a few to loan
- (4) Rehearse with students to familiarize them with the equipment
- (5) Budget lab time - watch for boredom
- (6) Move around the room during lab time

## 2. Textbooks and Materials

There are many available texts on the market in regards to pronunciation. My selection of these particular texts has been based on availability of class sets rather than on any other criteria. Fortunately, they have proven to be useful and I have provided a brief review of each for those unfamiliar with them.

- (a) English Pronunciation for Japanese Students - Harriet Gordon Grate, Regents Publishing Company Inc. 1974.

This is a very comprehensive text and one that I have put to good use with students of other language backgrounds as well. It covers most, if not all, problem areas for students of English. Although it contains some

stress and intonation practice, it mainly focuses on particular sounds and combinations.

The lessons are nicely set up for a minimum of preparation time on the part of the teacher. Approximately sixty pairs and forty sentences are given for each lesson. The emphasis on using the sounds in sentences once it has been mastered is particularly useful and lends itself to stress and intonation practice as well.

(b) Drills and Exercises In English Pronunciation.

Stress and Intonation, Part I and Part II - English  
Language Services Inc. MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc.  
1967

These two books contain stress and intonation practice ranging from word stress to dialogues and readings on a graduated bases. It is quite easy to use them out of sequence - a particular lesson or part of a lesson as required. There are dialogues, readings, lectures and speeches as well as poetry for the more advanced students.

The dialogues and readings are presented twice - one with stress marked, and once without. However, most of the exercises are marked throughout and leave little room for variability or for the students to apply new

knowledge. The index is comprehensive enough that teacher preparation can be done fairly quickly in terms of searching out material for a particular objective. Most of the exercises contain sufficient material for practice purposes and pair work can be done independently in a classroom setting with little difficulty.

(c) Additional Materials

I also keep a file of material consisting of Xerox copies for reproduction on hand and am always on the look-out for potentially useful paragraphs, exercises, poems and songs. I find it useful to sort these out from time to time and to keep a master list of these resources in my class notes for quick reference.

For songs, I keep a cassette tape of recordings whenever possible to supplement the hand-out. This is a valuable aid for people like myself who can't play a guitar or sing as well as others.

I have found myself suitable material for specific purposes in other textbooks, magazines, newspapers, volumes of poetry etc. These may be recorded on a master tape for class activities or merely reproduced by any method at hand. I much prefer having copies readily available, however, if copying equipment is unavailable, it may be used as dictation or copied from the blackboard.



The important thing is to get relevant material whenever possible. Pronunciation exercises are typically rather boring affairs which severely tax a teacher's imagination when attempting to make them fun. These additional materials are a good alternative and may be used as part of a class or an entire class. Students seem to like them once they get to know each other and the teacher. Repeats by request for certain songs or poems are good indicators of whether or not to retain the material for future reference.

Materials can be arranged according to objectives or generally categorized. I find general categories with objectives marked next to the item most useful and versatile.

For example:

Category: poems

(1) item (s) (th)

(2) item (rhythm)

In this file, I also keep master copies of essential material - data sheets, lesson plans, work-transcription lists etc. This way, if my supply of instruction sheets for the lab is running low, copies can be made quickly without having to make a new master copy.

### III Some Lesson Ideas

#### 1. The Introductory Lesson

This lesson is perhaps the most important one of the entire course. One consideration is that although students have enrolled in a pronunciation class, they may be vague in their own minds about the content or purposes. The introductory lesson is a good place to clarify what pronunciation entails, how it will be taught and what sort of results they can expect.

As attendance is not compulsory and students may change classes or receive a refund if the class does not match their expectations, clarification at the outset is essential. Absenteeism, dropouts and dissatisfaction may prove disruptive to the class in general for both students and teachers. It may also reflect on classes in general. As these are advertised by the media and word-of-mouth, enrollment can be affected by "consumer satisfaction" to some degree.

Clarification enables the student to set (or at least think about) specific and concrete objectives. "Improving my pronunciation" is a vague and general notion which does little to affect motivation. In some cases it can produce total inertia. Having specific information reduces the task to more manageable segments which the student feels can be mastered.

The introductory lesson is also a superb opportunity for me to obtain information from the students. Student ethnicity, age, ability and interests will vary from class to class. As a result, selection of materials and points of emphasis may shift drastically from class to class. I may find that pronunciation is a definite problem or that stress and intonation should take up a major portion of the course.

Student input, observation and analysis provide some insights into making specific lesson plans in response to student needs. In general, I have designed an introductory lesson around these considerations.

A. Materials

1. A dictionary and copies of how the dictionary uses transcription to indicate pronunciation. This provides the information that there is a sound system and that the components are finite.
  2. Data sheets (or blank pieces of paper) - and a few extra pencils - to obtain student names, ethnic backgrounds and reasons for taking the course. They may also indicate what they feel are problems for them.
-

3. Cassettes for the lab - if desired.

B. Objectives

1. General

- (a) Establish communication with the students.

- (b) Clarify goals and objectives of the course in order to increase motivation.

2. Specific

- (a) To familiarize students with course content.

- (b) Obtain student background and information.

- (c) Familiarize students with the idea of a sound system in English.

- (d) Optional - familiarize students with the language if time allows.

C. Implementation

1. Introductions - name tags can be very useful in order to learn the students' names quickly.

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2. Obtaining student information and clarifying course objectives.

### 3. The sound system

- examination of a dictionary and systems used to indicate pronunciation.
- discussion of problems and identifying problem areas.
- experimentation with air, vocal cords, mouth shapes etc. to get the "feel" of things involved in the course.
- instruction in the use of the language lab.

### D. Results

From the discussion and information obtained, I am able to establish some direction for the course. Identification of problem areas or concerns through observation and student feedback aids me in the selection of specific lessons for the future.

It also allows students to investigate the course and make a decision about whether to transfer or leave.

### 2. Key Vocabulary

This idea, borrowed from organic teaching philosophies has proven to be a useful one and particularly responsive to student needs in an English - speaking culture.

Each student contributes a word or two at the beginning of a class. The need of that word is the determining factor. These are compiled and recorded for all the students. Usually, the list is about four to ten words and requires about five minutes of the class time.

Students may refer to this when practising in the lab and may call for individual assistance if required. The important component is that these words are perceived by the student to be problems in their speech.

I have found that keeping lists of the requests may sometimes indicate an overall problem for a particular student or for the class in general. Instructional time may then be scheduled accordingly.

Usually, these words are not found in textbooks - most are brand names, place names, food or services. Students are often unable to ask for their favorite cereal, say where they work or eat certain foods in a restaurant. The class provides a place where they can feel comfortable exposing their "ignorance" and perhaps solving a small problem of their daily existence.

At first, they may be reluctant to admit certain words or phrases that have managed to escape them for as long as ten years, but, as they warm up to the idea, they enjoy these few minutes. I consider it time well-spent and it certainly enhances the relationships within the class.

### 3. Stress and Intonation

For many students, it comes as a surprise that stress and intonation are at least as important as correct pronunciation in communication. They are also more likely to be concerned with stress in individual words rather than sentences. It is up to the teacher to convince them and to instil some sense of the function of stress in the language.

This conviction stems from observation of conversations and also from my own inability to understand on occasion. I think native speakers may be more dependent on stress than pronunciation in order to understand. As it is highly related to meaning, we are listening for it in that sense.

Take, for example, the phrase "a pair of shoes". Misplaced stress will render this to mean "parachute" even if the pronunciation is perfect. In short, stress may be more related to interpretation on the part of the listener than the pronunciation. An incorrectly pronounced word with proper stress may be more likely to be correctly interpreted than the other way around.

In addition to meaning and interpretation, it is useful to keep in mind that stress is not only louder but longer! More time must be spent on stressed words and/or syllables.

Generally, I find students are more likely to reach objectives which are clearly spelled out to them. This should not take much of the class-time and a few examples will suffice. A very basic understanding of the principles involved aids in focusing student practice. The practice, in turn, will increase the awareness of the concept.

Various techniques can be used within the practice session. I try to infuse some sense of drama or at least enthusiasm into what otherwise would be a series of dull exercises. Any technique which involves physical motion on the part of the student seems to help. For this reason, most lessons on stress and intonation patterns are conducted in the classroom. Lab work can be used to reinforce as well as provide future reference for the students.

As oral stress is most related to meaning, it depends on interaction between people. A student doing exercises alone with a headset is not as likely to produce lasting results. Conversations, poems, songs or dramatic readings are effective reinforcers of rules and patterns learned in exercises.

I usually begin with a simple exercise. A sentence such as "This is a pen" is simple enough for the concepts to be visible. I ask students to pick the most important word in that sentence - the one that could stand alone in answer to a question. When they have selected the word "pen", I explain that because it's the most important word, it requires emphasis. I point out that native



speakers consider it important in communication to make the most important word(s) stand out from the rest. I could then erase the word and print it in capitals or colour to serve as a visual aid.

Then, I have students pick out the important words in a few other sentences. The complexity of these will depend on the level of the class. I relate these to meaning when discrepancies appear. I point out that we shift stress depending on what we mean to say. However, there are rules and patterns which we generally follow in speech.

From here, I explain a stressed word is not only louder, but longer. It takes more time to say. I have students practice this and use physical motions such as hand clapping, head nodding or arm waving to emphasize this.

For visual reinforcement, I use capitals or coloured chalk. I also put numbers under words to indicate units of time, or space the words.

Example: This is a pen.

1 2 3 4

or: This isa p e n.

---

Another useful technique is to record a brief paragraph, story or conversation for use in the lab. Students listen, mark the stress on copies and eventually read along with the tape. This improves

their listening comprehension of stress and gives them an opportunity to practice the "flow" of the language. I point out rules they may have already learned---noun compounds, contrastive stress etc. In addition, I watch for problem areas to aid me in selecting further exercises.

Poems and songs, particularly those with marked rhythm, are also useful. Conversations maybe selected from textbooks, or students may write their own. Newspaper clippings of current events may also be studied and read aloud by a student.

Due to the limited time available in this particular course, I try to select only those exercises which are most useful to the students. Common errors of language learners, and student errors are good indicators. In this way, they learn a few things well, but also gain an awareness which they can apply to other situations once they have learned to hear and use stress.

#### 4. De-Stressing

This concept may be introduced before or after stress. I have tried both and my personal preference is to introduce it first. My major objectives are to introduce the students to the idea of de-stressing, make them aware of general categories of de-stressed words and to provide practice time on selected exercises which illustrate this principle.

Providing the students with a list of typically de-stressed words has proven to be useful. Included in the list should be common prepositions, articles and pronouns. Examples of how these are used should be included for future reference.

Example: He's going to the store.

After practicing these in sentences and some fluency has been achieved, I try to provide additional reinforcement. A song that students seem to enjoy practicing these "tricks of the tongue" with is "There's a hole in the Bottom of the Sea". The words are easily learned and an increasingly faster pace provides a challenge to the students.

In addition, I introduce the concept of "grammatical garbage." I explain that these are words or parts of words which are important clues to grammar, but not necessarily to meaning. They are necessary to make sense, but are not stressed. Included in this list are prefixes, suffixes, auxiliary verbs and verb endings.

Analyzing words seems to be useful in this context.

Example: illusion  
disillusion  
disillusionment

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Another exercise is one commonly found in textbooks but easy enough to construct if the need arises. It provides practice with verb tenses.

Example: Cows eat grass

The cows eat the grass

The cows are eating the grass

The cows will be eating the grass

The cows have eaten the grass

The cows will have eaten the grass.

After some practice with these rather basic concepts, additional or more advanced exercises can be used both in the classroom and the lab for further practice.

I provide students with copies of a few paragraphs or a one-page story. Students are instructed to cross out all the "grammatical garbage" they can find. They may also be requested to mark stressed syllables or words if they are able to do this. The story may then be rehearsed in class or in the lab where I can provide individual assistance to students. This could be done sequentially with one story, or several may be used to provide variety.

Although students have difficulty achieving a high level of influence due to limited time, they are at least aware of the general categories of de-stressed items. Individual help via the lab appears most beneficial as students can then establish their own priorities and level of achievement.

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In terms of time allotted in the course, I use about three of the twenty classes for de-stressing. In general, I try to arrange these

sequentially as a unit in order to focus student attention. If it becomes boring, the classes may be alternated and this method affords the advantage of spaced practice, review and reinforcement.

5. "Whajasay?"

This appears to be a comprehension problem for most students rather than one which they feel deserves extensive practice. As they are functioning within an English speaking culture, it is essential for them to understand native speakers, but not necessarily imitate them. Some examination of deviation from the printed norm on the part of native speakers and limited practice seems to be sufficient at this point. The practice is intended to aid comprehension rather than to achieve fluency.

As these are often regional and may vary from speaker to speaker, I try to listen for the most common examples and consider frequency of use an important factor. Hanging around stores, shopping centres, bars, dialing up long-distance operators as well as associating with people of varying socio-economic status and age have proven to be profitable. In addition to providing examples of some rather interesting local diction, current slang and idiomatic expressions particular to the region maybe ferreted out.

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For example, "I seen him" and "I done it" pass without notice here. The use of the participle in this fashion is restricted to these two verbs - at least so far! Students who have carefully learned

grammar will need this explained. It is perhaps extraneous to a pronunciation class per se, but as a comprehension problem can be important to students.

I deal with these in at least one class and emphasize common areas when selecting objectives. One I would not omit is the pronunciation of "did" in combination with pronouns. I also deal with vocalizing voiceless sounds and "borrowing".

For example:

"put it on" = "pu di dón"

"didn't" = "dí dent"

"take it out" = "ta-ki-dóut"

"wouldn't he go" = "woo de-nee-gō"

Phonetic transcriptions could be used if students are accustomed to using it. However, I try to be as literal as possible for ease in comprehension and visual reinforcement.

In conjunction with this aspect, I encourage students to bring their problems to class. A particular problem may arise which concerns the entire class, or may be more appropriate for after class. Aside from one class devoted to pertinent issues, these are subjects for sporadic investigations at student request. Students enjoy it and it provides a relaxing break from intensive practice as well as information.

6. Pronunciation in General

At the outset of the course, I try to make it very clear that thirty hours of class time will not miraculously transform students into native speakers. They not only have interference from their own language, but also may have had as much as ten years' practice in mispronunciation.

No other method produces results like practice on a conscious level - and lots of it. It is hard work for students to change habits and particularly to transfer what they have learned into their own speech habits. It can also be boring unless a fast pace and concentration are maintained.

My major objectives are to select those sounds which cause problems for the entire class based on their own stated needs whenever possible and to provide an atmosphere conducive to serious practice. I also emphasize repeatedly that transfer is the most important aspect.

I select a sound (or sounds) for a particular lesson and appropriate material - the sound, in words, in sentences.

After I am sure the class understands the mechanics of the sound, it's lab work for the most part. This allows me the freedom to work with individual students and provide active reinforcement.

Transfer reinforcement can include anything and everything! If a student has selected a particular sound as a course objective, reminders can be issued frequently. The entire class or a friend may assist in focusing the student's attention outside of class. Signals are another alternative. Writing the sound on the student's hand is more practical than a string around the finger.

The tendency to go to sleep in the lab is always of concern. If students are bored, the material may be at fault. On the other hand, attention spans should be considered.

Breaking the material into parts is one solution. During the hour and a half, this means several small breaks for the students and fresh problems to stimulate their interest. Rather than recording the entire exercise for (l) and (r), I might use this sequence:

1. (l) in words; practice
2. (r) in words; practice
3. (l) in (r), contrasted; practice
4. sentences with (l); practice
5. sentences with (r); practice
6. contrastive sentences; practice

The time allotted for practice would depend on how many sounds were to be taught in one class and difficulty for students. Different combinations of the sequence are used to provide variation in the routine.



I also make sure to reinforce each student individually during the class. The attention and communication seem to be important factors in maintaining motivation. Some semblance of human communication within the lab is top priority no matter what the specific objectives may be.

How much of the course time is spent in pronunciation as an exact science depends on the class. I would consider ten of the twenty classes a minimum in any case. I find that alternating them with other material or using part of almost every class reasonable approaches to prevention of boredom. It provides variety for both students and teacher and allows for instruction in other aspects such as stress or general understanding.

### C. CONCLUSION

In summary, over the teaching of two courses, I have tried to put together a course which responds to the needs of adult students. Their stated objectives have played an important part in determining the nature and content to the course. This has been, from the outset, a primary consideration and has proven, through refinement, to result in positive student response.

As these are non-credit courses and no grade is given, evaluation on a formal basis was not used. It mainly consisted of observation and student statements. Some improvement was noted and seems related to student motivation and determination rather than any particular teaching material.

For this reason, during the second course, improving student motivation became a general objective. Supportive human contact - preferably on a one-to-one basis-appeared to bolster student confidence and motivation. As a result, improvement in speech habits and general knowledge were noted. Some students stated that they felt they had a better grasp of the sound system as well as stress and intonation. They felt that they could improve their own speech with further practice and felt more aware and capable of dealing with problems.

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For my own part in the process, I feel I have learned at least as much, if not more, than the students. Having my own objectives and methodology constantly under revision and testing as a specific objective enabled me to produce positive changes in methodology and approach.

This objective required me to keep notes on a daily basis. These were more than lesson plans such as are generally kept. They included ideas, opinions, student statements, brief evaluations and general thoughts. This extensive system of notes provided a running commentary on the classes and a basis of re-evaluation and re-organization.

At first, I felt these notes would require a great deal of time. With practice and increasingly clearer objective, I found that, in fact, only a few minutes after each class was required. As a practical teaching aid in non-defined courses of this sort, it is highly recommended and a practice that I intend to follow in the future.

